

Providing Emergency Communication

The Idaho EMS State Communications Center — State Comm — is committed to providing emergency communication services and coordinating resources to a number of different agencies throughout the state of Idaho.

The Idaho EMS Communications system operates 37 remote mountaintop base stations connected by microwave links to the EMS Communications Center in Meridian, Idaho. Radio contact is possible with literally every EMS service in Idaho.

EMS Communications Specialists are trained and certified in Emergency Medical Dispatch (EMD). Twenty-one EMS services statewide are dispatched by the EMS Communications Center using the mountaintop radio network. These include volunteer ambulance services, quick response units (QRUs), and specialized rescue units such as Idaho Mountain Search and Rescue.

Relays Information, Medical Requests

EMS services dispatched are primarily in small communities that have no dispatching capabilities of their own. The EMS Communications Center also can relay information between responding units that might not have radio contact with each other due to low-powered mobile radios and terrain, but can transmit and receive to and from the EMS Communications Center mountaintop sites. The EMS Communications Center can also assist EMS services with medical control requests regarding the care of specific patients. The EMS Communications Center can relay an EMS unit's radio traffic to a hospital, giving the EMS personnel direct contact with their medical control Physician.

The EMS Communications Center handles all dispatch telephone and radio traffic for Idaho Transportation Department 24/7/365. These include requests for:

- **Updated road report information;**
- **Reports of traffic hazards;**
- **Requests for activation of Dynamic Message Signs (electronic highway signs)**
- **Information on road closures and openings;**
- **Traffic signal malfunction;**
- **Traffic sign hazards;**
- **Input of information into the Idaho 5-1-1 Traveler Services system;**
- **Traffic crashes; and**

- **Hazardous materials spills.**

Communication for Aircraft

Flight following for any EMS and non-EMS service is also a daily routine. A Communications Specialist can contact directly State Aeronautics, Civil Air Patrol, and Air Force Rescue Coordination Center (AFRCC) at Tyndall Air Force Base, FL, if problems occur, such as downed or overdue aircraft.

More than 30 state and federal agencies use the EMS Communications Center as their primary notification point. Examples include EPA, DEQ, Civil Air Patrol, State Aeronautics, Bureau of Homeland Security, Public Health, and the INL Oversight Commission. The EMS Communications Center is also a link between Idaho and the FEMA National Warning Center, (NAWAS).

Hazardous Materials Releases

All reports of hazardous materials releases, WMDs, radiological and explosive incidents are reported to the EMS Communications Center. The Communications Specialist notifies appropriate agencies when requested, coordinates response of emergency teams, and facilitates conference calls involving multiple agencies, using a 96-port teleconference bridge. Each hazardous material report results in an initial conference call with the on-scene Commander, DEQ, BHS, Health District and the appropriate Regional Response Team.

Information Organization

The EMS Communications Center maintains computer files listing each community in Idaho, its local EMS, law enforcement and fire agencies, and closest hospitals, air ambulance service and extrication unit. Another task is maintaining file and contact information for all EMS services in Idaho and the surrounding states. The EMS Communications Center is staffed 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.